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Trails Radiating from New Westminster, c. 1865

Between 1859 and 1862 the Royal Engineers, acting under the direction of Governor James Douglas, laid down the broad outline of highways in Greater Vancouver. These roads do not conform with the rectangular street grids adopted later, and are therefore conspicuous on a modern street map. Expansion of the road system south and east of New Westminster began in the 1870's.

The accompanying figure is transcribed from sheet two of an ambitious 1 inch = 10 miles map of British Columbia which was a part-time project of surveyor and draftsman J.B. Launders at the Lands and Works Department, Colony of British Columbia.

Seven sheets were started, covering southern British Columbia in two tiers. Although the sheets are not signed or dated, they can be assigned to Launders from entries made in the Department's work book for 1865, and by the style of the work book for 1865 and the style of the map. Prints of all seven sheets will be found in the map room at the Provincial Archives and at the Royal Geographic Society, London.

Sapper James Benjamin Launders came to British Columbia in 1859 as one of Captain H.R. Luard's contingent. When the Columbia Detachment of the Royal Engineers was disbanded in 1863, Launders was part of the majority who elected to settle here. He remained in the Lands

and Works Department which was set up under Colonel Moody, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, as part of the fabric of colonial government.

During his career Launders produced hundreds of finely drawn plans and maps for the Department. One of his best known compilations is the 1871 "Trutch" map of British Columbia. (Joseph Trutch was the incumbent Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works.)

Examination of the excerpt from Launders' map show all seven trails run from tidewater to tidewater. They were built for at least two reasons: for alternative military access and to open the land for survey and settlement. In the case of extremely severe winters, such as 1861/62 when the Fraser was solidly frozen for weeks, the trails also gave civilian access to salt water for supplies and mail.

On arrival in late 1858, Col. Moody showed alarm at the militarily exposed position of the provisional capital of Fort Langley on the south bank of the Fraser. Exploring downstream on the north bank, he almost selected Mary Hill for the site of the capital, but finally chose the hill which is now the Royal City, right at the apex of the Fraser delta.

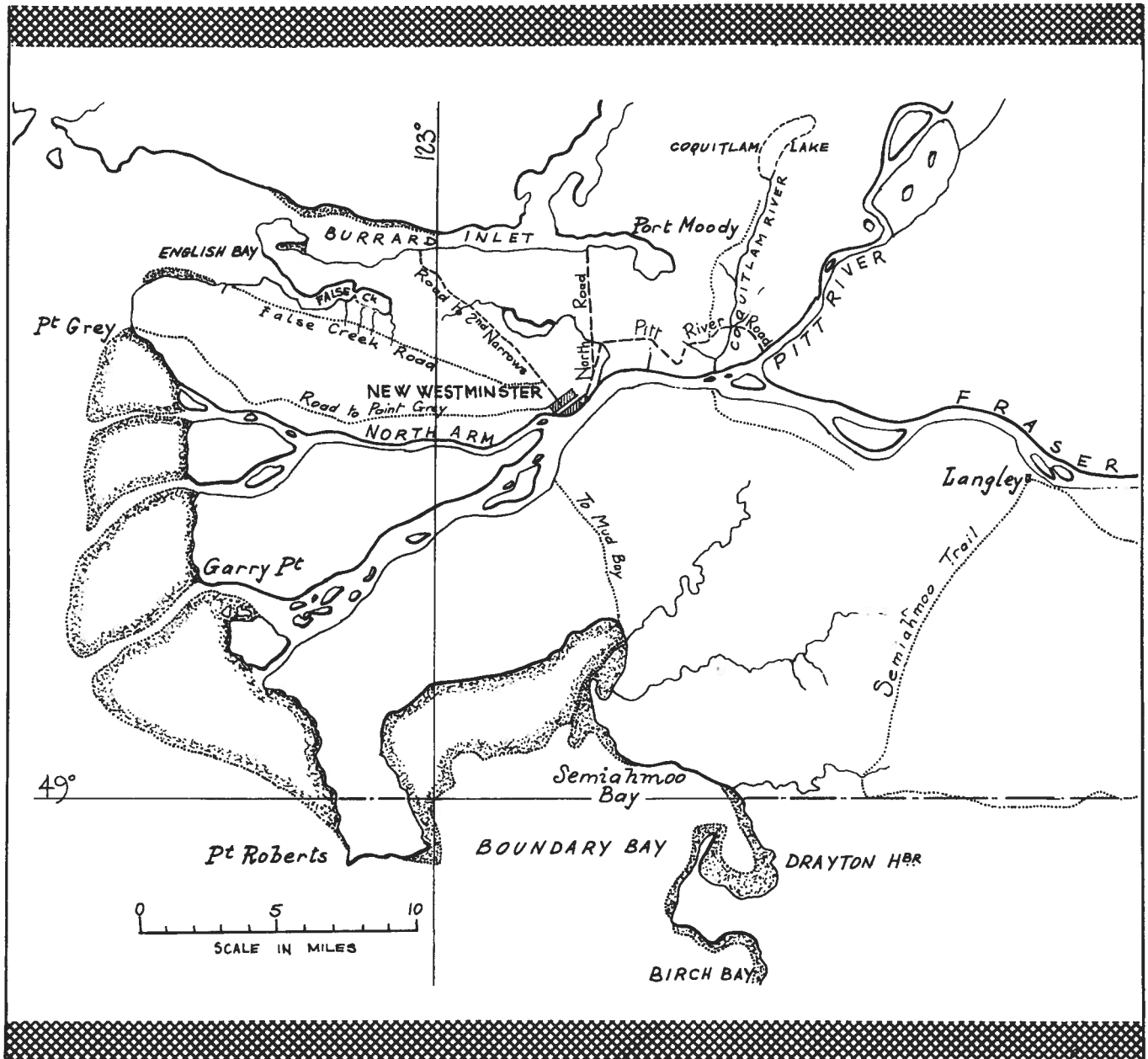
The Royal Engineers established their camp, which included an observatory and a printing press, about a mile upstream of Queen(s)bo-

rough, on a flat now in front of the old federal penitentiary.

Two of the five "roads" started from the Royal Engineer Camp on the east side of New Westminster hill, the other three started on the west side.¹ For some distance from the New Westminster street grid the roads ran straight, before succumbing to the topography. The straight roads

were used as convenient baselines for district lot surveys on either side. This applies particularly to Douglas (now Eighth) Street, and to the North Road.

The standard width of road allowance was one chain (66 feet or 20 metres), but the early contracts only called for clearing an aisle 10 or 20 feet wide through the forest. Most road and trail building



From Sheet 2 of the unfinished LANDS AND WORKS DEPARTMENT 10-mile map of British Columbia, c. 1865. Draftsman: J.B. Launders (ex Royal Engineers).

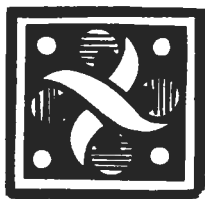
work was awarded through public tenders to specifications and plans drawn by the Royal Engineers, operating as the Lands and Works Department.² The Royal Engineers later supervised and accepted the contractors' work.

Launders made many of the plans and tracings, which fitted him for compiling his 10-mile and other maps.

The work was very heavy for hand tools. There were contractor failures and abandoned contracts, but gradually the roads and trails were pushed out from New Westminster, then were widened. The usual contract price was £60 per mile of road opened 20 feet wide. The contractor was often paid in land valued at 10 shillings per acre, the contractor to select the land. A well-financed contractor could be paid in land at 120 acres per mile. All brush and trees up to 10 inches in diameter had to be removed. Larger trees were to be cut down at chopping height and rolled off the trail. A completion date was specified.

When the trails were accepted as complete, they required continual maintenance and clearing from traffic and weather and rampant vegetation. For this purpose, chain gangs of minimum security convicts tethered to a long, clanking chain were employed as part of their rehabilitation.³

Notes on the seven roads and trails on the excerpt from Launders' map follow. The name on the map is given first, followed by most of the synonyms. At times, the same name was used for two different trails.



North Road

Trail to Burrard Inlet; Trail to Port Moody (inlet); Port Moody Road; North Road to Port Moody.

The first contract to build this direct connection to Burrard Inlet was let in 1859, but the road seems to have served more as a baseline for land surveys on either side than as a thoroughfare. On 29 May 1867 (ex Corporal) Howse reported: "The roadway from the Brunette to Burrard Inlet is overgrown with fern and underbrush, leaving only a foot track along the line . . . it is badly cut up, the surface being washed away, which has exposed numerous roots, small boulders, etc."⁴

This accurately describes the North Road 115

years later on its descent to Burrard Inlet from the shoulder of Burnaby Mountain. This part of the road was bypassed in 1884, when Clarke Road was built north east from it to the new settlement of Port Moody at the end of the inlet, over the hypotenuse of the triangle.

Going north on the North Road in 1982, it is blacktopped to just north of Clarke Road, widening to six lanes at the Lougheed Mall. North Road is gravelled beyond Clarke Road, to the crest on the side of Burnaby Mountain. At the crest, it is closed by two rows of boulders and abandoned beyond. It can be followed as a foot trail through the dense deciduous second growth forest on a good descending grade as far as the Barnet highway where it appears to have turned sharply east to ease the increasing grade.

The waterfront served by North Road is now designated piers 65 and 66: the "Burnaby Bulk Loading terminal" for petroleum products.



Pitt River Road

The North East Road

This road gave access to the farming lands north and east of New Westminster as far as Pitt River. It was first opened in 1862. It branched from the foot of North Road, not far from the Royal Engineer Camp, and was built in several stages.

The first third of Pitt River Road is now Brunette Avenue which follows the old line until it is superseded by the new, widened, Lougheed Highway at the tip of the Cape Horn hill. The next third runs from Cape Horn into the grounds of Riverview hospital, then turns sharply east to cross the Lougheed Highway, the C.P. Rail tracks and the Coquitlam River, as Pitt River Road.

The final third makes a loop round the north end of Mary Hill (named for Col. Moody's wife) before ending unceremoniously in the bush on the bank of Pitt River. The road is blacktop all the way.



Unnamed

Coquitlam Lake Trail

At the west bank of the Coquitlam River, the Coquitlam Lake Trail was built north and south from the Pitt River Road, giving further access to lands along the right bank. By the end of 1863, trail building had reached within two miles of Coquitlam Lake.⁵

The writer has not found any sections of this trail on the ground.



Road to 2nd Narrows (*sic*) (not Second, see map)

Douglas Street Road; Douglas Road; Burrard Inlet Road; The Mail Road; New Westminster and Hastings (Stage) Road; Hastings Road; Extension of Douglas Street Wagon Road; Road to Lumber Mills on Burrard Inlet; ...

The many synonyms for this road suggest it was well used. It began as a straight-line extension of Douglas (Eighth) Street in New Westminster, reaching mile 5, between Burnaby and Deer Lakes in 1861.⁶ It finally reached Burrard Inlet at the townsite of Hastings in 1865.⁷ One contract allowed "the contractor to be at liberty to wind the road to avoid marshy places or large trees ...". In 1875/76 it was extended west along the south shore of Burrard Inlet to Granville townsite.

The "Road to 2nd Narrows" survives largely intact as far west as Vancouver City limits (Boundary Road). Beyond this, it is swallowed by the Procrustean grid of city streets.

In New Westminster, Douglas Street is now Eighth and its extension northwest into Burnaby has become Canada Way. Then as Douglas Road, the route splits from Canada Way and crosses the central valley of Burnaby (Still Creek). It joins the Lougheed Highway for a while, then follows the sidehill northwest, round to Boundary Road.



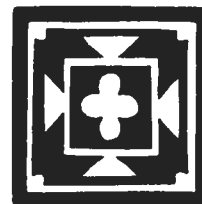
Road to False Creek

Started 1859: **Trail to False creek; Road to English Bay; Road to Outer Anchorage (Jerry's Cove/Jericho); False Creek Trail; Moody Path; Military Trail;** relocated 1885, as: **Granville Trunk Road; Westminster-Vancouver Trunk Road; New Road; Vancouver Road; and finally, Kingsway.**

This work suffered from shortage of government funds and a succession of inexperienced contractors. It never reached its original destination on English Bay, but was diverted to False Creek and eventually crossed it at the Narrows, now Main Street. Thus, it connected New Westminster with Burrard Inlet at what became Granville, later the City of Vancouver. It left Douglas (Eighth) Street near New Westminster at 14th Avenue.

The initial contract was dated 10 October 1859, but the trail was not open to through traffic until 1861. The original contractor, a loose partnership, was still claiming extra payment in January of 1865.⁸

The trail was sufficiently busy, especially with the advent of the Canadian Pacific Railway, that it was entirely relocated and rebuilt as a "trunk" road in 1885/86. The general concept of the old trail was followed, but the new alignment intersected the old winding trail in only three places.⁹ The new road left New Westminster by 12th Street, parallel to and west of Eighth Street.



Road to Point Grey

McRobert Trail, New Westminster and North Arm Trail; North Arm Road; River Road; South Marine Drive.

This trail was built by Hugh McRoberts and his two cousins, the McCleery brothers. The three were relatively experienced contractors having worked successfully in the Fraser Canyon. They were paid, as usual, partly in land which they selected just west of the south end of Granville

Street. The McCleerys are remembered here by a street name.

There is no evidence of contractor difficulties on this work, but owing to the shortage of colonial funds the trail never reached Point Grey, but turned south to meet the Fraser at a wharf at the east end of the Musqueam Indian Reserve.

The trail left the road system of New Westminster via 6th Avenue. South Marine Drive follows its course closely almost to Granville street. West of this, its course is now lost, but could be reconstructed from the legal surveys of the lots it crossed.



To Mud Bay

Mud Bay Trail; Kennedy Trail (1861); Telegraph Trail (1865); New Westminster and Semiahmo Telegraph Trail (1874); Great Northern Railway (1890's), now Burlington Northern.

The contract and plan for this work describe "a Road from opposite New Westminster to join the Langley Road, and a Branch toward Boundary Bay." The emphasis then shifted to Boundary Bay "with a Branch to join the Road to Langley."¹⁰

There is no evidence that any work was done toward Langley, but Acting Sergeant Major George Cann, R.E., inspected the work towards Mud Bay, reporting that it was "nothing but a Trail and not a Road."¹¹ It is likely that its route along the base of the hill was an aboriginal trail.



Unnamed

"towards Langley from a point nearly opposite Tree Island", "about 4 miles above the R.E. Camp at New Westminster."¹²

This uncompleted trail, 1860/61, was the first to head east from New Westminster south of the Fraser River to join existing trails at Fort Langley. The contract was signed 01 December 1860 by Messrs. Girard and Co. with a completion date of 31 December 1860, which date was deleted and

replaced by 31 March 1861.

Capt. Parsons inspected the first four miles on 04 March 1861 and reported to Col. Moody that the work was not satisfactory.¹³ The trail should have been built further south to avoid three great ravines, and the line of trail should have been "laid out by the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, or his Agent" before the work started. A note on the contract, dated 17 April 1861, shows "This contract thrown up by Messrs. Girard and Co. ..."

Part of this trail may have been incorporated in the 1865 Telegraph Trail which ran up the south bank of the Fraser River enroute to Alaska and Siberia on behalf of the Collins Overland Telegraph.



¹ British Columbia Colonial Correspondence, PABC, F950 (1867), Lands and Works (New Westminster)

² *Ibid*, F957 (1859, 1860, 1861), Lands and Works (Contracts and Agreements)

³ *Sessional Papers of British Columbia*, 1873 onwards, Annual Reports of Public Works, "New Westminster District"

⁴ B.C. Colonial Correspondence, PABC, F950 (1867), F951 (1867), Lands and Works (New Westminster)

⁵ *Ibid*, Charles Good, F650 (1864)

⁶ *Ibid*, F957 (1861) and F1030, William McColl (1862, 1864)

⁷ British Columbia. Lands and Works Department. "A Portion of New Westminster District ... and ... Vancouver Island, B.C." Victoria, 1902. Shows Douglas Road all the way to Hastings Post Office, on the shore of Burrard Inlet.

⁸ B.C. Colonial Correspondence, PABC, F1037 (1865), D. McDonald

⁹ B.C. Lands and Works Department. Plan 772 NWD. "Diagram of Lines, Group I [District Lots]", C. 1861. Details parts of three roads from New Westminster.

¹⁰ B.C. Colonial Correspondence, PABC, F957 (1859, 1860, 1861), Lands and Works Department

¹¹ *Ibid*, F267 (1861), George Cann

¹² *Ibid*, F963 (1858-59), Lands and Works (Specifications)

¹³ *Ibid*, F1313 (1861), R.M. Parsons